[English]

Joint Venture in Field of Trade with Pakistan

450. SHRI MANIKRAO HODLYA GAVIT:
SHRI SUSHIL CHANDRA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a great demand for Indian Tyres in Pakistan;

(b) if so, whether any delegation has visited Pakistan in this regard, to explore avenues of joint venture in several fields of trade; and

(c) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) Yes, Sir, There is a good demand for Indian Tyres in Pakistan.

(b) and (c) A trade delegation of the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which had representatives from the Indian Tyre Industry also, visited Pakistan from 28th July to 2nd August, 1997. The delegation visited Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi, and attended meetings with Pakistani business & trade representatives who are stated to have showed considerable enthusiasm in their interactions with the Indian delegation supporting close trade relations with India while at the same time stressing the need to protect the interest of the Pakistani manufacturers. In respect of the Tyre Industry, however, the emphasis was more on increasing exports of tyres to Pakistan rather than on joint ventures in this sector.

Rice Export

451. SHRI SURESH R. JADHAV : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware that Indian rice export has been affected badly due to devaluation of ASEAN currencies in the recent past keeping in view that ASEAN countries are the main competitors of India in rice export; and

(b) if so, the steps take by the Government to protect the interests of Indian rice exporters?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) It is not possible to assess the impact of devaluation of ASEAN currencies on rice exports on account of different varieties traded, variations in quality and additional expenditure incurred in grading and packaging.

(b) Some of the steps taken to enhance exports of rice include participation in international trade fairs; arranging buyer-seller meets; conducting market development compaigns; and providing assistance for product development.

[Translation]

Piparwar Project

452. SHRI MAHABIR LAL BISHVAKARMA : Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) the quantum of coal produced in Piparwar project of Bihar during 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94; and

(b) the amount spent under Piparwar project for the development of adjoining area during the above period?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH) : (a) and (b) The quantum of coal produced in Piparwar project under Central Coalfields Limited (Bihar) and amount spent for the community development in adjoining areas of the project during 1990–91 to 1993–94 are as under:—

Year	Coal produced (million tonnes)	Amount spent on community development (Rs. in lakhs)
1990–91	0.73	1.91
1991–92	1.08	4.13
1992–93	2.62	3.31
1993–94	4.24	5.86

Excise Duty on Stone Industry

453. PROF. RASA SINGH RAWAT : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware that the stone industry is facing a serious crisis due to excise duty levied on it in the last budget, thus treating it at par with the marble-stone;

(b) the rate at which the excise duty has been increased in respect of cutting, smoothening and finishing of stone respectively in the Stone Industry during the last three years;

(c) whether the Government have received various memoranda from stone traders, organisations and peoples representatives of Rajasthan for reducing excise duty;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the Government had sent a team of tax experts to ascertain the factual position of the Stone Industry in this regard and whether the Government has also given assurance in the House for taking necessary action; and

(f) if so, the report of the said team of tax experts and the efforts being made by the Government to save the Stone Industry in the context of the above report?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) No excise duty was imposed on stone, at par with marble slabs, tiles etc., in the last Budget. On the other hand, excise duty on articles of stone falling under heading No. 68.07 was reduced from 20% to 18% ad valorem.

(b) to (f) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

Gupta Committee on Pay Scale of RRB Employees

454. SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have received the report of working group constituted under the Chairmanship of Shri R.C. Gupta to look into the disparities in the pay scale of the employees of rural banks; and

(b) if so, the action being taken by the Government to implement this report?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) and (b) As reported by National Bank for Agriculture & Rural Development (NABARD), a Working Group under the Chairman ship of Shri R.C. Gupta was constituted by them in the year 1991 which submitted its report in February, 1992. The report was considered by the Government/ NABARD and appropriate instructions were issued by NABARD in March, 1993 to the banks. These, inter-alia, included methodology of implementing the National Industrial Tribunal (NIT) Award, loans and advances to be extended to RRB staff, clarifications on equation of posts in RRBs vis-a-vis sponsor banks and various aspects relating to fitment of RRB staff.

[English]

Committee on Intellectual Property Rights

455. SHRIMATI JAYAWANTI NAVINCHANDRA MEHTA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to set up a Committee under Intellectual Property Rights to check illegal publishing and sale of Government publications;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if no, the reasons therefor and other measures being taken to check such malpractices?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) and (b) No such proposal is under consideration.

(c) Action for infringement of Copyright of Government work can be taken under the Copyright Act, 1957.

[Translation]

Financial Assistance to the Sick Units

456. Dr. ARVIND SHARMA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of sick industries in the country, State-wise;

(b) the details of financial assistance provided to such sick units during the last three years, year-wise and State-wise;

(c) the number of proposals for providing financial assistance to sick units are pending with the Union Government, State-wise; and

(d) the time by which the pending proposals are likely to be disposed of?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) to (d) : The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House to the extent available.

[English]

Projects of VEPZ

457. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether due to uncertainties since its inception, Visakhapatnam Export Processing Zone (VEPZ) has finally made a turn-around;

(b) whether approval of 4 projects with an estimated investment of over Rs. 350 crores by the Union government have come as a shot in the arm of the VEPZ;

(c) if so, whether the Union Government have been approached for speedy approval of VEPZ; Phase II;

(d) if so, whether the Government have agreed to the proposal of the VEPZ, Phase II; and

(e) if so, the extent to which the amount of VEPZ is likely to be released?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) and (b) The Visakhapatnam Export Processing Zone has been operationalised with effect from 1.4. 1993 on completion of basic infrastructural facilities of the first phase covering an area of 163 acres. Development of the Zone has proceeded satisfactorily after transfer of land in a compact block by the State Government. 18 projects have so far been approved